

Physical Illness and Biblical Counseling

TGI Biblical Counseling and Discipleship

**THE GOSPEL
INSTITUTE**

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Worldly Theology - The Cause of Pain and Suffering is...

- Someone else's fault. (Adam)
- God's fault.
- Satan's Fault
- No one's fault.
- My fault, "God's punishing me"
- Result of evolution

Actual Causes of Suffering/Pain

HEAT

- Living in a Fallen World (Gen. 3:17-19; Jn. 16:33)
- Satan's manipulation of the world-system, using his demons to oppress and tempt (Job)
- Others who sin against us (Lu. 17:1-3)
- God's loving discipline (Heb. 12:1-14)

Actual Causes of Suffering/Pain

HARVEST

- Personal Sin – (Ja. 5:15,16; Prov. 13:15)
- God may use pain and suffering to punish sin – (Ex.15:26)
- God's discipline – (for believers)
- Suffering may be a result of sinful responses to life- problems (complicating problem)

Biblical Theology – God’s Purposes in Pain and Suffering...

What if God, desiring to show his wrath and to make known his power, has endured with much patience vessels of wrath prepared for destruction, in order to make known the riches of his glory for vessels of mercy, which he has prepared beforehand for glory (Rom. 9:22-23)

Biblical Theology – God’s Purposes in Pain and Suffering...

- ***Displays God’s glory*** as He redeems man from sin and its consequences

...“Rabbi, who sinned, this man or his parents, that he was born blind?” Jesus answered, “It was not that this man sinned, or his parents, but **that the works of God might be displayed in him.** (Jn. 9:2b-3)

Biblical Theology – God’s Purposes in Pain and Suffering...

- ***Displays His Grace and Mercy*** ... let your light shine before others, so that they may see your good works and give glory to your Father who is in heaven. (Matt. 5:16; see also 2 Cor.12:9-10)
- For it is all for your sake, so that **as grace extends** to more and more people **it may increase thanksgiving, to the glory of God.** (2 Cor. 4:15)
- God refrains from meting out what is deserved, because of His mercy. (Rom. 6:23)

Purposes in Pain and Suffering...

For Our GOOD. (Rom. 8:28-29)

- ***God blesses the sufferer*** because they are a vessel bringing Glory to God – (2 Cor. 2:14-17; 4:10-18)
- ***God sanctifies through suffering***...makes a person more like Christ – (Ja. 1:2-12; Job 1:8-12; 2:3-6; 1 Pet.)
- ***Demonstrates God's love***...Discipline (Heb. 12:1-14)
- ***Motivates repentance*** - God may use pain and suffering to bring about repentance (Num. 21:5-7; 1 Cor. 5:5; Ps. 119:65-75)

Purposes in Pain and Suffering... For Our GOOD. Rom. 8:28-29)

- ***Refines and enhances ministry*** – (Job 2:10; Luke 23:34,39-43; Jn.19:11,25-27,30; Phil. 1:12-18)
- ***Deters from sin*** - warns and motivates
- ***Points us to eternal rewards*** through the fragility of life (Ja. 4:13; Job 7:9; 1 Pet. 1:24; Ps. 102:11; 39:5)

Suffering is to be Expected

- I have said these things to you, that in me you may have peace. In the world you will have tribulation. But take heart; I have overcome the world.” (John 16:33)
- (2 Tim. 3:12; 1 Pet. 2:20; 4:13,14; 5:10)

When We Embrace a Biblical View of Suffering...

- We're less inclined to be shocked (1 Pet. 1:3-8; 2:12-25; 4:1-12)
- We're less inclined to denial – "...the Lord gives and takes away" - Job
- We're less inclined to be angry – "doest thou well to be angry?" - God asked Jonah
- We're less inclined to bargain with God - Gideon
- We're less inclined to become depressed and shut down – Elijah (1 Ki. 19)

Biblical Principles Regarding Illness

- You do not need to be a physician to help. (2 Cor. 1:3-11; Rom. 15:14)
- Not that we are sufficient in ourselves to claim anything as coming from us, but our sufficiency is from God, who has made us competent to be ministers of a new covenant, not of the letter but of the Spirit. For the letter kills, but the Spirit gives life. (2 Cor. 3:5-6)
- Listen and pay attention to the counselee.
- Physical illnesses are defined by physical evidence of damage.

Your Responsibility – Your Heart

- Embrace God's Sovereignty over the illness.
- Accept the diagnosis and symptoms as a given.
- Do not try to prove or disprove the diagnosis.
- Unless you are medically trained and functioning in a formal capacity as a licensed, medical practitioner, do not practice medicine. ¹
- Encourage the counselee to follow basic principles of good health.

Your Responsibility – Biblical Goals

Cultivating a Heart of Worship (heart-change), teaching and ministering God's Word to implement a spiritually and emotional relevant, hope-filled, prayer-saturated, Holy-Spirit-dependent life-style within the local church...

- Changing and developing eternal Perspectives
- Teaching so they meekly embrace God's Purposes
- Helping disciples learn lessons from the trial
- Encourage responding in ways that please and glorify God
- Equip counselees to become disciple-makers within the local church...every counselee has the potential to become a counselor!

Your Responsibility - Point to Christ

- **Faith** in His character and power (Rom. 10:17; Jer. 32:17; Lam. 3:22-26; Zeph. 3:16-17; Job 13:15; Heb. 13:15)
- **Hope** (Rom. 15:4, 13; 1 Tim. 1:1; Heb. 4:12-16)
- **Comfort** - God's love and promises and purposes (2 Cor. 1:3-11; 2 Cor. 1:20)
- **Worship**, Praise, Thanksgiving, serving others, Prayer (Phil. 4:4-9, 13, 19; Eph. 5:20)
- “Then Job arose and tore his robe and shaved his head and fell on the ground and worshiped. (Job 1:20)

Your Responsibility – Encourage Obedience in Spite of Suffering

- Controlled by the love of Christ (2 Cor. 5:14-15)
- Controlled by the Holy Spirit (Rom. 8:35-37; Phil. 4:11,12)
- Controlled by the purposes of God
- Not *controlled* by the agony of pain and suffering.
- Not *controlled* by the constant pursuit of relief from pain and suffering.
- God calls us to obey, in spite of the agony of the illness – (1 Cor. 15:57; Rom. 8:35-37; Eph. 3:13-14)

But What About the Illness?

- Think biblically- (2 Cor. 10:5; Phil. 4:8)
- God will not exceed your ability to handle the difficulties of the illness. (1 Cor. 10:13; Phil. 4:13)
- God's grace is available and sufficient. (2 Cor. 12:9,10; 9:8; 1 Cor. 10:13)
- Job honored God in suffering, so can you. (Job 1:1 to 2:10)
- Paul struggled with his desire to go to heaven or to stay and minister, there will be tension between desire to escape and a desire to please God...But God is faithful... (Phil. 1:23-25; 1 Cor. 10:13)

But What About the Illness?

- How the disease was diagnosed?
- Learn the natural history of the condition.
- How has the condition effected the person's lifestyle?
- How has the condition effected the person's thinking/attitudes?

How Are They Responding?

- How has the ***diagnosis*** affected the person's thinking/attitudes?
- What is their main motivation?
- What do they want/desire most?
- Where are they banking their hopes?
- What are they praying for? How are they praying?
- How has the treatment affected the person?
- What are the complications of treatment?

Terminal Illnesses

- Other than sudden death or the rapture every person will die as a result of some illness.
- Even with a terminal illness God doesn't stop you from ministry; He simply changes the dynamics of them.
- Ministering to dying people - keep them informed of what will happen as they die.
- This illness is to be the vehicle that God will use to bring you to Himself in heaven.

Glorification Removes the Sting of Death

- When the perishable puts on the imperishable, and the mortal puts on immortality, then shall come to pass the saying that is written: “Death is swallowed up in victory. O death, where is your victory? O death, where is your sting?”

(1 Cor. 15:54-55)

- Rev. 21:3,4; 22:1-5
- ***Death is the final battle in a victory already achieved!***